



Sen. Cassano, Rep. Rojas, Sen. Osten, Rep. Fox, Sen. Fasano, Rep. Aman and other distinguished members of the Planning and Development Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to deliver this testimony to your committee. My name is Gordon G. Willard and I am providing this testimony **in support of HB6311** "An Act Prohibiting Breed Specific Dangerous Dog Ordinances".

I've worked for Connecticut Humane Society as Executive Director for two and a half years and in Animal Welfare for thirty years.

This proposal prohibits towns from crafting dangerous dog ordinances based upon breed. There are a number of problems when basing any legislation on breed and bite incidence information because breed identity is more often incorrect and statistical information about bites many times relates more to the popularity of a breed rather than the breed itself. A more popular breed means that there will be more of them in a population. When that happens, there may be more reported bites for that breed but that does not mean that that particular breed is more dangerous. It means that there are more of them and thus the number of bites may be higher.

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association Task Force on Canine Aggression and Human-Canine Interactions, data actually indicates that intact male dogs are involved in 70% to 76% of dog bite incidents. Intact (unneutered) male dogs represent 80% of dogs presented to veterinary behaviorists.

The AVMA's report indicates that a bite depends on at least five factors: heredity, early experience, later socialization and training, health and victim behavior. Breed is not listed as a determining factor and as recently proven through the use of DNA testing; trying to identify a breed type visually is many times not supported by the actual DNA information.

Dangerous dog laws should be carefully written to address the actual problems. These ordinances might better be called Dangerous Dog Owner Laws so that the behavior of the dog is the responsibility of the person who owns, trains, cares for and manages the dog.

Dangerous Dog laws must be mindful of the rights of pet owners and afford them due process. The laws should target the dogs that do pose a serious risk to animals and people and should include penalties for the owners as well.

If these laws are designed to reduce the incidence of bite incidences, they will not in and of themselves accomplish that goal. Reducing the number of dogs bites requires a much more comprehensive approach including proper reporting, community education and on-going monitoring which includes enforcement of strong yet fair minded dangerous dog ordinances not based upon breed.